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ABSTRACT

Intended for people in government and other agencies who make decisions on policy or on funding for literacy, this short report of an international seminar on literacy summarizes seminar themes. The first topic considered is the rationale for investment in education. The connection between literacy and national development is stressed, and three interrelated components of a strategy toward literacy are defined: literacy for adults and out-of-school youth, Universal Primary Education, and adult continuing education. A discussion of literacy in context looks at the role of the national goals, the correlation between illiteracy and poverty, and the large number of the world's illiterates who are women. Adult continuing education is then discussed as effective followup or postliteracy activity. Suggestions are offered for what can be done to promote literacy, including cooperation between third world countries, establishment of regional offices and associations as clearinghouses on training, and national training workshops for literacy workers. A final discussion of the meaning of cooperation focuses on five problem areas identified in the delicate area of international relations and understanding: project identification and formulation, cooperation among national governmental organizations, the selection and use of consultants, evaluation and monitoring, and conflicting reporting systems. (YLB)

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**International Council
for Adult Education**

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Co-operating for Literacy

**Paul Fordham
(ed.)**

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held in Berlin, October 1983**

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The Seminar on 'Co-operating for Literacy' was a follow-up of the Seminar on 'Campaigning for Literacy' (Udaipur, 1982) held in co-operation with the International Council for Adult Education and Seva Mandir. The report by H. S. Bhola (with Josef Müller and Piet Dijkstra), *The Promise of Literacy* can be obtained from Nonos Publishers, P.O. Box 6107, D-7570 Baden-Baden, West Germany at the price of DM 38. Institutions from third world countries may apply for a free copy from the German Foundation for International Development, Hans Boeckler Strasse 5, D-5300 Bonn 3. When ordering, please indicate DOC 1122 A/a.

Renewed dedication and effort at the national, regional and international level is required to overcome the intolerable situation in which hundreds of millions of people find themselves. The planetary dimensions and the unjust social and human implications of illiteracy challenge the conscience of the world.

Udaipur Literacy Declaration,
para 18. January 1982

The best contribution that a developing country can make to international co-operation in literacy is to set clearly its own goals and purposes and make the most determined effort to reach these goals.

Manzoor Ahmed,
Seminar Paper

Contents

Foreword	7
Why Literacy?	9
Literacy in Context	13
Beyond Literacy: The Need for Continuing Education	20
What Can Be Done Now?	27
The Meaning of Co-operation	35
Appendix	41

Foreword

Since 1980 we have been able to build upon the experience of three productive international seminars on literacy. These seminars have concentrated on the issues arising from massive illiteracy in developing countries, although we are conscious that industrialised countries may also be faced with similar problems, albeit on a much smaller scale. The seminars sponsored by the International Institute for Educational Planning and UNESCO (Arusha, 1980 and Madras, 1982) were concerned mainly with the professional aspects of literacy work, while our own seminar¹ (Udaipur, 1982) looked at broad issues of policies and programming. All three included some focus on the place of literacy in over-all development strategies.

Moreover, there has been an important shift in perspective about how to eradicate illiteracy: neither adult non-formal education, nor the expansion of schooling are by themselves enough. The goals of universal primary education *and* of adult literacy outside the school will both have to be vehemently pursued if developing societies are to maximise their human potential. And this perspective accords well with the view put forward in the UNESCO Medium-Term Plan, 1984-89. Some would go further and assert that there must also be a vigorous programme of adult continuing education to build on the literacy achieved through UPE on the one hand and through adult literacy programmes on the other.

The Seminar of which this is the first report was held in Berlin from 16 to 20 October 1983 and was attended by 72 people from 31 countries. This short report is intended for busy people: people in governments and in other agencies who make decisions on policy or on funding for literacy. A longer version for those who need to explore in detail will include most of the papers and will be published at a later date. The Seminar was unique in two respects. Firstly, it brought together for the first time representatives of major development agencies, international and inter-governmental bodies and non-governmental organisations as well as experts, mainly from developing but

also from the industrialised countries. Secondly, it was unique in that we not only discussed and exchanged experiences, but were focussed all the time on possible ways and means for the promotion and intensification of international co-operation for literacy.

Co-operation for Literacy is the theme and the hope of this report. We commend it to all those engaged in the many tasks of national and international development.

Anil Bordia, Chairman of the Seminar

Yusuf Kassam, International Council for Adult Education

Josef Müller, German Foundation for International Development

1. Held in co-operation with Seva Mandir and reported in H. S. Bhola (with Josef Müller and Piet Dijkstra), *The Promise of Literacy*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, 1983.

Why Literacy?

Investment in education is everywhere under scrutiny. The days are long past, when a simple and direct connection was assumed between investment in education and national development.

Global recession, the accompanying need to reconsider development priorities and the absence of any clear balance between the availability of education and the availability of paid jobs: all these have combined to question the importance of literacy as a priority development goal. When thousands of school leavers are unemployed, why should even more scarce resources be devoted to literacy, either for school-age children or for illiterate adults? Would it not be better to sacrifice early universal literacy – and other basic services – for the sake of boosting employment in directly productive sectors?

Now these are the kind of questions more frequently asked by development planners and by politicians than by educators. But if educators are to re-affirm their commitment to universal literacy by the year 2000 – as we did in Berlin – then educators themselves must also take a hand in answering the hard questions about development priorities as well as those about educational priorities. We must be able to justify our belief that literacy is today not only a basic human right, but also an essential tool for national development.

Of course, development may sometimes happen without recourse to literacy. For example, the farmer may be enabled to increase his production, perhaps with the help of an extension service using oral communication, in person or on the radio. But sooner or later, if the development process continues, if the economy becomes more complex and if basic services improve: in other words, if 'rural development' really begins to happen, then there will come a need for literacy. While it is useless to offer literacy instead of food, housing, water supplies or electricity, it may become uneconomic to offer them without it. Literacy may be only a part – but it is still an essential part – of the range of basic services which bring direct economic returns as well as direct social benefits.

Lack of pure water and/or miles of walking to fetch it leaves less time for production and increases the likelihood of illness. Lack of vaccination, health education and basic curative services leaves workers and peasants too weak to be fully productive ... Illiteracy reduces workers' flexibility and productivity even in 'simple' occupations such as peasant farming, construction or handicraft ...²

In determining the place of literacy as a development priority the question of timing is all important. For the individual, unless he is motivated to learn, it is futile to offer a literacy programme. It is the same with nations. For them, the skill will be to seize the 'magic moment' to determine when *now* is the time to embark on an effective national programme. If political will is the essential starting point for literacy – as our Seminar certainly believed – good judgment about timing may be the essential ingredient for success.

Given that for many countries the time is clearly *now*, what emphasis should be placed on different aspects of work towards literacy? There has been much debate in recent years about the relative importance of Universal Primary Education (UPE) on the one hand and of mass adult education on the other; but this seems to us a false antithesis. We therefore welcome the dual strategy recently (1982) adopted by UNESCO: the extension and improvement of primary education and renewed literacy efforts for out of school youth and adults. Without mass adult education, UPE alone would take 30 or more years to achieve universal literacy even if instantly established: without UPE, the effect of an adult literacy programme could only be temporary.

However, important though this dual strategy may be, it is not by itself enough. For we see literacy as far more than the acquisition of simple reading, writing and numeracy skills. Young people and newly literate adults must be able to use these basic skills for purposes which have clear meanings both for them and for the wider society. Access to newspapers, text books, stories and other reading matter is one necessary aspect of a literate environment. But so, too, is a broad range of non-formal adult education programmes both general and vocational. And it is here, of course, that literacy ceases to be the

2. R. H. Green, Paper on 'Literacy, Depression and the Poor'.

exclusive preserve of the educator. Personnel in health, agriculture and other sectors must all be brought in if literacy is to make its maximum impact. Co-operating for literacy makes as much sense within countries as it does at the international level. We return to adult *continuing* education in the section on 'Beyond Literacy' below.

Our definition of 'literacy' is therefore a wide one. We see it as having three inter-related components: (I) literacy for adults and out of school youth, (II) UPE and (III) adult continuing education. And all three must be seen and planned as part of the overall process of national development. To answer the question, why literacy? is as we see it intimately bound up with the question, what for?

All this is not to lose sight of the broadly humanistic, idealistic reasons for literacy. If there are close on one billion* adult illiterates in the world – as there are – then there are also one billion living reasons for literacy. Or, as an Indian participant put it: „I don't want to live in a society where literacy is the culture of only one part.“ And again, for the individual, literacy „gives a kind of faith, an ability to ask questions.“ We are therefore thinking of the role of literacy in a development which is not simply a notion in the mind of an economist, but a means by which millions of individuals can transform both themselves and their societies.

It is sometimes asserted that enthusiasts for literacy ignore or undervalue the importance of oral cultures. Oral cultures have their own validity and they must not be devalued. It would be an unforgivable arrogance which equated illiteracy with ignorance or literacy with wisdom. What we do assert is that the ability to read and write is increasingly indispensable for living in all societies. Even where illiteracy rates are still high, there is plenty of evidence to show that illiterates do feel marginalised whenever they come close to the literate world³. And in countries with a long tradition of literacy on the one hand combined with high rates of illiteracy on the other, there is a clear connection between mass illiteracy and mass poverty.

* Defined as one thousand million.

3. See, e.g. Yusuf Kassam *Illiterate No More*, Tanzania Publishing House, 1979.

The illiterates are at a clear disadvantage when they try to participate in either the world of work or the world where decisions are made. They are increasingly dependent on others and denied access to written cultures or to further education: above all, they are not able to make a full contribution to the life and work of any nation.

There is a dynamic interplay between literacy and development at all levels of society. Literacy cannot be separated from the development process. If all the countries of the world are to move forward from stagnation, recession and despair they will need to generate a new 'climate of urgency' for literacy.



Literacy in Context

We have so far been concerned with the general development context of literacy, but not the particular political, social or economic circumstances where action actually takes place. There are general issues, like the correlation between illiteracy and poverty; or the fact that more women than men are illiterate; and these we must continue to emphasise. But we must also recognise that in literacy, as with other aspects of development strategy the initiative must rest in the first place with national governments.

Unless national governments themselves are prepared to give high priority to literacy, then illiteracy as a world problem will continue to grow. No amount of international recognition of the problem (e.g. in UNESCO), or of international co-operation, or of support from international or national aid and development agencies, will make any fundamental difference unless national governments themselves take the essential political decisions. There is very general agreement that the starting points for literacy are (I) clear political resolve to give it priority, and (II) full integration with each particular country's political and economic planning. Unless these starting points continue to be emphasised there will be disagreement and conflict rather than purposeful co-operation. An essential corollary is that all countries – and the international agencies – should seek to work within a framework of national sovereignty and decision taking. In taking these decisions all must have due regard for the co-existence in each country of both general and particular conditions. And the major general determinant is inevitably the present state of the world economy.

The seminar was reminded just how difficult is the present state of affairs. From a period of optimism and growth between 1945 and the late 1960s, the world has moved to a point where there have been increasing strains and repeated shocks which the economic system could not manage. In real volume terms both world trade and world output per person have been static or declining for the first time since the 1930s.

Both globally and nationally the poor have been most severely affected by the continuing economic crisis. This is not to say they were doing particularly well during the period of optimism and growth. Even then there were growing inequalities between rich and poor countries with, in many cases, growing inequalities within countries. And the number of poor and illiterate people increased in absolute terms even when the world economy was booming. Recession now increases both poverty and illiteracy alike, while at the same time it reduces the capacity of all countries to take effective action. More than ever it is a matter of choosing the right priorities; and more than ever it is necessary to encourage international co-operation if we are to maximise the effective use of very limited resources.

Even in the rich countries there has been decline in the quality and accessibility of basic services, but it is the poor countries who in general have suffered most. Within all countries it is the poor – especially the illiterate poor – who have been most hardily hit when there has been general economic decline.

Now we have already pointed out in the first section of the Report that the pragmatic case for literacy rests on its interaction with general development goals. The question of whether basic services should be sacrificed and inequalities increased in order to raise productivity is answered with a resounding, no – not merely because it would be unjust but because it would be inefficient. Moreover, if these development goals are part of a determined effort to alleviate poverty, then literacy – as part of basic services and the meeting of basic human needs – is itself a major contributor. „The history of literacy efforts is the history of varying and contending ideas about how literacy can and should serve the goal of meeting the basic needs.“⁴

Further, especially in rural areas, access to basic services is an incentive to stay and produce as opposed to drifting into urban unemployment. In Africa above all, access to education, health services, water, fuel and knowledge of how to raise agricultural output

4. Manzoor Ahmed. Paper on 'Co-operation Among Developing Countries in Literacy – Issues and Prospects'.

and income — all of these come very high on what peasant producers themselves see as their priority needs.

In all this we are in no way asserting that a 'basic human needs' approach to development is by itself enough. We are aware of the powerful arguments now being put at the international level in favour of a new international economic order. At this level many developing countries are united in their determination to see a re-structuring of the world economy which reduces injustice and inequality. We do not dissent from these arguments. Nevertheless, at the national and local levels, meeting basic human needs is of continuing importance in the face of human indignity and human poverty. If we are to give high priority to reducing poverty and inequalities then we must also give high priority to literacy. The seminar was united in its view that some re-emphasis of these general purposes is now urgently necessary. If we pose the question: „literacy for whom?“ the answer continues to be, for those who have least.



Now among this enormous group of the disadvantaged, the position of women is everywhere seen as of increasing importance. Eighty per cent of the world's illiterates are women; this is simply one of many statistics which highlights the existence of multiple deprivation and massive gender inequalities. Women everywhere are becoming more

and more conscious and more and more vocal about these inequalities. In the seminar they were able to give both voice and substance to their case, and there was very general agreement that women everywhere should be the particular priority group within the general frame of those who have the least.

It was for this group above all that the question of, 'literacy for what?' focussed most clearly on the raising of consciousness. It was agreed for this group that literacy in a general developmental sense is not enough. In the paper by Jennifer Riria (Kenya) the seminar was asked to consider whether literacy has helped women to a clearer understanding of the following questions: -

Does literacy help women to realise that they have had to withstand discrimination?

Does it help women to realise that the division of labour often amounts to economic exploitation of female labour even when this is disguised as home life?

Does it make them aware of the prejudices and obstacles which block women's access to education?

Does it make them aware of the inhibitions which hinder them from taking leadership roles in many aspects of daily life?⁵

Of course, there is unlikely to be total agreement that these particular questions, or the way they are expressed, are absolutely right for every society, culture and nation. We are back here to the balance which must exist in every country's policy between adherence to general principles (a move towards equality and greater participation by all) and the particular concerns of individual countries: there can be no universal blue print. Nevertheless there was very general agreement on the following: -

- (1) Literacy for women has to transform their way of seeing the world: few who are illiterate can build personal freedom and a sense of independence. In the Seminar there was a recognition of the dangers of confrontation - of frightening women and of alienating men. Ways must be found of finding justice and

5. Paper on 'The Perspective of Women'.

equity for both men and women in an overall development context.

- (II) Literacy for women can be counter-productive if the content simply reinforces traditional roles (e.g. home economics for women; functional, employment programmes for men) at a time when women themselves are seeking to take on new roles (e.g. of community leadership).
- (III) In many countries it is often helpful to begin with women's *organisations*, a fact which has been recognised in the Arab world since 1972.
- (IV) Both men and women must realise that literacy and social advancement *will* bring about a change of power relationships between men and women. It will be a matter of individual country judgment as to how much of this kind of change should there be encouraged.

Just as differences of view about literacy for women are closely related to differences in local political or cultural milieux, the same is true for other areas of major debate. To have a mass campaign or not? When is the smaller scale selective-intensive approach most appropriate? What languages to use? What is the best methodology and in what circumstances? What areas of work are suitable for international co-operation?

Perhaps the question of literacy for *empowerment* emerges most sharply as requiring different definitions in different contexts – not simply for women (although that is part of it) but for all poor and less privileged social groups. Questions of power, justice and equality are inevitably closely tied to particular political systems and ideologies. If we genuinely want to co-operate *for* literacy we have to recognise that revolutionary (e.g. Nicaragua), non-revolutionary (e.g. Barbados or Thailand) and highly pluralist (e.g. India) political systems and societies may each in their own way be making valiant efforts to promote their kind of literacy.

Statements like: „development should bring not only prosperity but also a more just social order“ and, „if knowledge is inadequate or horizons limited by illiteracy, then people will be exploited by those

who are literate" commanded general support in the Seminar. But there were also more divergent views. On the one hand was the assertion that literacy is "the expression of the problem of power. If we do not make an approach in this perspective we are not going to approach the problems." On the other hand was the view that, "literacy should *not* be about a more equitable distribution of power: it can have a simple economic justification." Both views express different political realities. One conclusion must be that, as another participant put it, "if political power is the goal then the arena for action is political."

What we are here describing is the difference between revolutionary (and post-revolutionary) countries compared with the non-revolutionary. Each in their different ways may make effective efforts to combat illiteracy. However, if we look for widespread international co-operation, literacy work cannot be too firmly associated with any particular political system.

The seeming contradictions between different kinds of approaches may simply be a question of different political settings. The mass campaign, where all sections of the population are mobilised for a short, sharp, effective effort has worked very well in certain revolutionary situations: Cuba and Nicaragua are the obvious examples. However, with these countries, there were other special circumstances. There was already at least a 50% literacy rate; students and others could be sent into the countryside as a result of political commitment and popular enthusiasm, there was one dominant language. The results were impressive. In the case of Nicaragua the 1979-80 'crusade' was said to have reduced illiteracy in five months from 50% to 12.9%.

However, not all revolutionary countries have followed this straightforward path. In China a mass campaign in the 1950s was followed by more selective-intensive approaches* designed to raise productivity

* "a concentration of efforts among groups who are likely to have an innate motivation for literacy and further learning and are placed in relatively favourable situations for using and further improving the literacy and numeracy skills in their everyday life. Such groups may be urban and peri-urban youth, peasants

and the 'level of spiritual civilisation'. The illiteracy rate is now down to 25%.

Other countries with national programmes – often on a mass scale – have had similar success. Tanzania in the 1970s is an example where national commitment and purpose in the pursuit of literacy made it possible to reduce illiteracy from 67% in 1967 to 27% in 1977. Progress still continues. More recently (1980) Kenya embarked on a sustained national programme as have several other countries. In all cases it is clear that timing has been of great importance. When to seize a 'magic moment' may well be the key decision.

It seems clear to us that approaches to adult literacy cannot be considered as mutually exclusive. However, the Seminar also agreed that *the time is now ripe in many countries for sustained national programmes, if possible on a mass scale*. If we are to make a major impact on the promotion of universal literacy by the end of this century, nothing less should be considered.

and farm workers belonging to co-operatives or similar projects, women belonging to self-help groups or associated with other community development projects, illiterate workers of factories and other economic enterprises and so on. The idea is to work with people who are placed in a relatively dynamic situation from a development point of view and to use the literacy programme to support the possibilities of change that are already there. The expectation would be that it would become an ever widening circle and more and more people would find themselves in a dynamic environment and become interested in literacy."

Manzoor Ahmed, op.cit.

Beyond Literacy: The Need for Continuing Education

It is a weakness of some literacy programmes that they do not go beyond basic reading, writing and numeracy skills; and this has led to increasing demands for effective 'follow-up' or better 'reading materials' or 'post-literacy' activity. However, many of these demands, by the very terminology used, reveal a need for more *internal* co-operation in the struggle for literacy. For literacy does not exist in a vacuum. People become literate – either at school or in adult education – because they want to *do* something; and this something has a content which is bound to affect other basic services besides education.



What we are talking about here is the whole range of educative services such as health and family planning, agricultural extension, post-primary skill training (e.g. in craft skills for self employment), community development and women's groups with educational goals. Such services have their roots in attempts to answer specific development needs, like better hygiene, better husbandry or the generation of self-employment. In the last decade, and in an attempt to bring them closer together, they have often been called 'non-formal education'. In this Report the term 'continuing education' is used in the same sense.

Now, if we see 'literacy' as we have already defined it (to include UPE, adult literacy and adult continuing education) and if 'continuing education' embraces all the services noted in the previous paragraph, then the first essential element is co-operation between all these basic services themselves. For this two complementary shifts in attitudes are necessary: (I) adult educators and other literacy workers must accept that they cannot know about all the many topics which motivate the learners and (II) all types of extension worker must accept a responsibility to become skilled communicators and teachers.

There are implications here both for the organisation of basic services and for training. The organisation of basic services cannot be left entirely to different sectors of government; there has to be strong co-ordinating machinery if the 'continuing education' element is to receive sufficient attention. Similarly, the training of extension workers must include a significant adult continuing education component. And literacy workers themselves have to realise that a move beyond literacy has to involve many other sectors and agencies.

Any emphasis given to 'literacy' must inevitably have regard to these issues. For behind this emphasis is the assumption that during these programmes learners do acquire basic educational skills, and that these skills are indispensable for the personal development of the individual, and for the role that an individual can play as a member of the family and in the society. In other words, through basic education people should secure access to much wider opportunities for learning; be better able to take care of themselves and their families; as workers they should be more productive and as citizens they should

be able to play a discriminating and constructive role in the environment, in society, and in political life.

Moreover, large enrolments in primary education, high drop-out rates, limited possibilities for transfer to secondary schools and the existence in some areas of low educational standards all re-inforce the call for more remedial and more continuing education. Non-formal educative services of all kinds were never more needed than now.

Thus we have to note that the clientele of continuing education consists not only of persons who have completed adult literacy courses, but also youth who have dropped out after acquiring literacy in primary schools as well as those who have completed primary education but cannot continue to secondary schooling. It is this perspective which makes continuing education critical for harnessing in full the investments made in basic education.

Related problems which require emphasis here are (I) the large number of new literates (whether from school or adult education) who relapse into illiteracy and (II) the lack of motivation for continued learning unless the literates find their new skills are both necessary and useful. A literate environment *and* continuing education opportunities are both prerequisites for sustained success – the creation and development of fully literate societies.

It is the whole environment not simply policy for literacy which determines motivation for learning. In the first place, the individual should feel that he needs to continue learning. Women whose spouses are far away need to improve their literacy in order to cope alone or even to correspond with their spouses. Persons participating in skill training which requires a certain level of literacy feel impelled to attain that level.

Closely related to individual needs is the opportunity to continue learning. Now, for opportunity to be really accessible, mere availability may not be enough – positive steps to secure participation are necessary. For example, a village library which contains books and periodicals of interest and is opened at the time when readers can be expected to have leisure, often remains unused by most of the villagers because there is no habit of using it. On the other hand, if the

library worker visits homes of the prospective readers and draws their attention to something interesting and is willing to help if the new literate falters, the library service is much more likely to succeed.

Need as well as opportunity can be naturally enhanced if there is the stimulus of social and economic development. This is the third and perhaps the most important point. Learning and literacy cannot grow in a stagnant situation. „The linkage of learning and development gives vitality, a dynamic potentiality, to both.“⁶

One of the most systematic attempts to provide a sound structure for adult continuing education is that of Tanzania. The Seminar had the benefit of a lengthy case study of this programme and it is only possible to present a brief outline in this short Report. The case study elaborates four sets of objectives for continuing education. These are: -

Remedial courses to make good the deficiencies existing in primary schools and in adult literacy: „an alternative system of ... educational advancement.“

Continuing use of literacy skills in an increasingly literate environment. Rural libraries, newspapers, radio programmes and cinema are here the chosen media.

Application of literacy skills in functional programmes related to employment, understanding national policies and improving linguistic ability in the national language (Swahili) and the second official language (English).

Community development through programmes which promote: leadership; democratic and co-operative knowledge; Tanzanian history and culture; political education; international understanding.

Literacy workers in Tanzania have the advantage of a well articulated political philosophy which includes firm Presidential support for adult education: „to live is to learn and to learn is to try to live better.“⁷ Within this ideological framework, how are the objectives

6. Anil Bordia, Paper on 'Co-operating for Post-Literacy'.

7. Julius K. Nyerere, New Year Speech of 1970.

offered above put into operation? The main operational instruments are: rural newspapers, rural libraries, correspondence courses (which have focussed on teacher training for UPE), Folk Development Colleges, instructional radio and an increasing flow of textbooks and other reading material. These are not seen as separate activities but essentially complementary to each other.

Rural newspapers were initiated as part of the UNESCO/UNDP work-oriented adult literacy pilot project. Subsequently efforts have been made by the Ministry of National Education to see that rural newspapers are established everywhere. To date there are seven zonal rural newspapers while „most of the regions and districts have already launched regional and district newspapers through ... writers' workshops.“⁸

Rural libraries are an important supplement to the rural newspapers and also give opportunities both for the further development of language skills and for more systematic follow-up reading. The aim is to provide a library for each of the 8,000 villages in Tanzania. Currently there are more than 3,000 libraries with approximately 400 titles in each. The majority of libraries are situated in primary schools, a fact which emphasises another aspect of the country's education policy: the determination that each primary school shall become an educational resource for the whole community.

Of course there are problems. The organisation of a rural library service *and its maintenance* is a much more formidable undertaking than instruction in basic literacy and numeracy through a mass campaign. In the long run it may also be more expensive. Indeed, just as post-primary schooling is always much more expensive per capita than more elementary work, this is also true of adult continuing education. Once again therefore we have to emphasise the need for internal co-operation from all sectors of society. Success in continuing education would, as one Seminar member observed, „provoke an avalanche of work“, while another observed that education beyond literacy „cannot be a linear process.“ The whole of non-formal education must be seen as a part of continuing education.

8. Z. J. Mpogolo, Paper on 'Post-Literacy and Continuing Education'.

The question of adult continuing education – or 'post-literacy' as it is sometimes called in this context – is now being given increasing attention by the UNESCO Institute of Education. The Institute has initiated a series of case studies designed to reflect concrete experience in several selected countries. These studies focus in particular on adult new literates and have been used during 1981-83 in a series of regional orientation seminars. The process of linking basic literacy to non-formal education generally has begun, and there is increasing awareness of the need to think more seriously and more purposefully about doing so.

The difficulties, the complexities and some of the rewards of this kind of linkage are illustrated by the Folk Development College programme in Tanzania.

The FDC project was launched in Tanzania in 1975 as a multi-purpose adult education project aimed at maximising educational impact in every district in order to raise the general level of economic activity while at the same time creating a much more co-ordinated and integrated approach to the training requirements of the villages.

Since FDCs are there to provide new knowledge and skills to the Tanzanian people many have started running economic activities which are aimed at reducing their running costs. Such projects include the establishment of canteens, retail shops, vegetable and fruit gardens, animal husbandry and other projects.

... The main aim of the FDC project is to train adults from the villages with the assurance that they will return to their villages after their training. The training they get is not intended to produce people who will go to the towns to look for jobs after their training.⁹

The FDC curriculum includes agriculture, accountancy and technical science as well as leadership and political education. And at this level there are bound to be severe resource constraints. Moreover, the FDCs and other existing programmes alone cannot satisfy the needs of all those primary school leavers seeking further education in whatever form this may be available.

9. Z. J. Mpogolo, *op.cit.*

Success in basic literacy inevitably requires firm policy decisions – and support – for adult continuing education. For it is here that the development impact of literacy will be most keenly felt. The aim must be literacy for development rather than literacy for frustration. Several countries have now begun to create the necessary institutions for continuing education beyond literacy. But these still require continued support and continued growth.

In sum, the lessons of experience to date seem to be: planning for adult continuing education is an essential component in planning for literacy; there must be close co-operation with other sectoral programmes; the resources required are substantial; it is at this stage when basic literacy becomes most cost-effective; aid and development agencies should be as concerned with this area of work as they are with basic literacy programmes.

What Can Be Done Now?

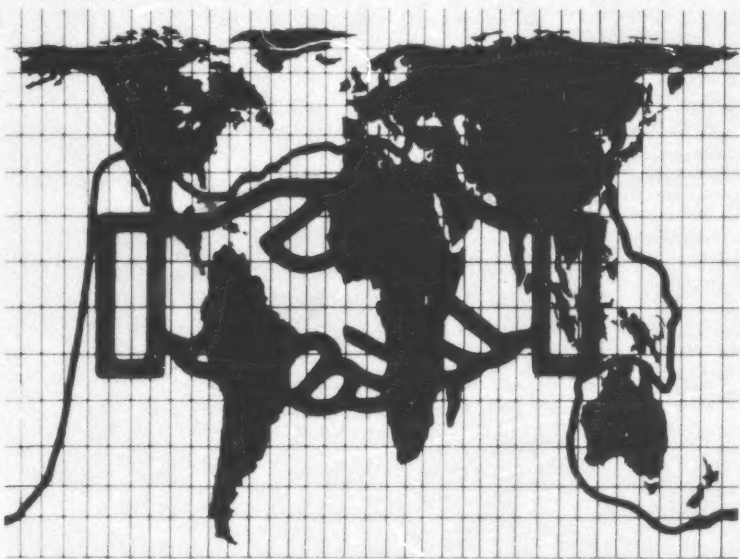
As we have already noted, 'Co-operating for Literacy' must begin at the national level: in determining priorities, in allocating resources and in deciding on the means by which policy shall be put into practice.

International co-operation with regard to literacy has a supplementary role and is therefore of the second order of priority in the fight against illiteracy. The first priority is the national will and national decision to reduce and eliminate illiteracy, involving the planning of the literacy campaign, mobilising the needed national and local resources, creating the technical and human resources to sustain the literacy and post-literacy phases and making both phases part of the national educational and development effort. Literacy is thus first and essentially a national imperative, and co-operation from international sources – multi-lateral, bilateral, intergovernmental and non-governmental – has to support and supplement this national effort.¹⁰

What is really very encouraging is the priority *already* given by many developing countries to the promotion of literacy. Success in Thailand or India, Burma or Nicaragua is success for the whole of the developing South. We need to publicise these successes and also learn from them. In the edited papers from this Seminar and in the record of our discussions will be found ideas and methods, skills and inspiration which can be adapted by any other country wanting to go down the literacy road. This is one area where regional organisations like the African Adult Education Association, the Caribbean Council for Adult Education, the Arab Literacy and Adult Education Organisation or the Centro Regional de Educación de Adultos y Alfabetización Funcional para América Latina are so vitally important: organisations which often get left out or simply forgotten when bi-lateral aid agreements are negotiated.

10. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah. Paper on 'Co-operation for Literacy Among International/Intergovernmental and Non-Governmental Organisations'.

What all this activity means is that the South itself has already acquired and utilised most of the understanding, knowledge and skills necessary to promote successful literacy work. There is certainly still a place for North-South co-operation, but the South-South dimension must now be given increasing emphasis.



Even here it is certainly not a question of transferring successful models from one country to another; as we have seen, national policy set in particular contexts gives far too much diversity for that. Moreover, it is probably in the more technical aspects of literacy programmes where there is the most scope to apply the lessons of international experience rather than in respect of philosophy, objectives and organisation.

Common methodological questions for which appropriate solutions have to be found in any serious literacy programmes include techniques of teaching the mechanics of the literacy skills, choice of a language in multilingual situations, recruitment and training of personnel and the production of instructional materials. The cumulative

body of knowledge in all of these areas should be the starting point for decision-making.

The South's expertise is usually based on good field experience. This expertise may be available next door in the neighbouring country, in the form of personal expertise or interesting innovative approaches. Closer contacts among adult educators in third world countries will enable them to assist each other more effectively in training efforts through the exchange of personnel and materials as well as by inviting participants from neighbouring and especially from smaller countries (who cannot afford major training institutions) to take part in ongoing activities.

UNESCO Regional Offices and/or Regional Associations such as the Asian South-Pacific Bureau of Adult Education, together with the other regional bodies mentioned above, should assume the task of a clearing-house on training; this would collect information on: experienced trainers in the region, planned or ongoing training activities and the training materials available.

It is in the recruitment and training of personnel, and in the production of reading materials where there is probably the most scope for a transfer of techniques and ideas between one country and another. The most important common issues are: re-orientating primary teachers to deal with adult learners, preparing volunteer instructors for their roles and training appropriate to people who will perform the management, planning and evaluation functions. In these areas the work of DSE in multi-national training for instructors, and the related work of IIEP and UNESCO and of UNICEF provided a focus for debate in the Seminar.

The DSE model of co-operation involves assistance to literacy workers by organising both international seminars and national training workshops; in this case in eastern and southern Africa. Working in partnership with national and international institutions, there has been a substantial input to the development of training materials.

Participants in these activities have themselves identified the areas where there is a continuing need for co-operation in training. These are as follows:

organisation and planning, especially of large scale programmes; curriculum development where basic literacy is linked to a functional content in agriculture, health, nutrition and other productive work;

production of reading materials, including newspapers, pamphlets and books designed to foster a literate environment;

production of distance teaching materials, especially for in-service teacher training;

innovative communication methods like rural radio; and

evaluation and monitoring of existing literacy programmes.

It is suggested that the priority group for this type of training should be middle level workers like administrators, trainers of trainers and programme specialists involved in day-to-day planning, organisation, materials production and so on. In general 'middle level' personnel will exert a multiplier effect as well as being practitioners. In this way international co-operation in training will reach to every level in a programme.¹¹

Lack of information about training opportunities – as with good practice of all kinds – is a barrier to the further development of national programmes. The establishment of regional clearinghouses and direct contacts among experts and institutions would facilitate considerably the flow of information, strengthen co-operation, and contribute to the economic use of scarce resources. Much useful information which does exist remains known to very few people. Though the writing of reports is a habit in all bureaucracies, these reports rather frequently disappear in files. In its Draft Medium Term Plan 1984-1985 (22 C 5), UNESCO invites organisations, institutions, foundations, etc. to co-operate in training, especially in the field of literacy. To this end we need more efficient dissemination of experience.

While international organisations or foundations may have, with good reasons, their own training policies and plans, assistance to

11. Josef Müller. Paper on 'Co-operation and Training'.

third world countries in organising *their* own training activities on a regional or national basis, becomes more and more important. This means the institution of genuine co-operative training programmes with and through local professionals themselves. Specialists who are sent to help should be persons who are grounded in knowledge and experienced in a special area. Moreover they should be willing to fill gaps in local efforts. Such gap filling can be extremely helpful, and can make better use of available personal and material resources than ambitious 'own' programmes run from a European or North American capital or university campus.

A more specialist approach to training has been adopted by IIEP with its concern for improving local level administration in national programmes. A training network of local participants in five countries of north-east and east Africa has been established. Through sub-regional workshops and participation in national training programmes there is continuing development of training methodologies in this crucial aspect of planning for literacy. A further sub-regional workshop in 1984 will help:

- finalise a basic document on training methodologies;
- establish systems of local level training;
- disseminate results to other regions and sub-regions;
- stimulate research in the support of training.

Research was also considered in relation to training as a whole. This is essential for all countries, but it must be linked very closely to practice. Above all it must give literacy workers at every level the confidence to act. Probably the best way of achieving this is if they, together with the learners, participate in the creation of knowledge. Participatory and action research are likely to be important parts of any research programme. The Participatory Research network established by ICAE is a significant international resource in this area of work.

An example of North-South *and* South-South co-operation in adult education research comes from a UK government sponsored project into degree level training for adult educators. Here a research team from five countries (Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and UK) is jointly evaluating training courses in all five countries.

Training and research are just the areas where regional co-operation could be most useful. And yet regional organisations often have no funds for things like sending the local trained expert to a neighbouring country. International agencies are often criticised for being insensitive to local needs. Indeed, any co-operative work has to be based on individual country requirements. A regional organisation, with close contacts with its 'constituents' has more chance of being sufficiently sensitive than a more remote body. On this, and on the more general issues, Malcolm Adiseshiah writes:

The more general form of co-operation which will assist all the developing countries, particularly the 59 countries who, according to UNESCO, have more than 50 per cent of their population as illiterates, is the programme of documentation, exchanges of information, ideas and techniques which the international organisations ... can and should provide. I have taken the existence of 50 per cent of the population of a country being illiterate as the cut off point where assistance and co-operation are urgently needed. Because empirical studies show that when a country reaches for its population 50 per cent of literacy, it has crossed the threshold for attaining literacy of its entire population very largely on its own momentum ...

The three international organisations which have the responsibility to provide the intellectual infrastructure in this programme of co-operation for literacy, namely, documentation, seminars and symposia, and publications, are UNESCO, IIEP and ICAE and its regional groups – Asian and South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education, African Adult Education Association, Caribbean Association of Adult Education and Latin American Association of Adult Education ...

The reasons for placing the major and original responsibility on the three organisations are many-sided. First there is the intellectual factor. Primarily and obviously these three agencies are the competent agencies in the field of education and adult education. In the case of UNESCO, apart from its constitutional educational mandate, its expertise in the area of adult literacy goes back to the second session of its general conference in 1947 in Mexico when it decided to launch the Pilot literacy project in Marbial, Haiti, and has over three decades developed an impressive programme of documentation, a network of training centres, work-oriented literacy projects, conferences and seminars and publications including a journal and newsletter ...

ICAE as the specialised adult education organisation and its four regional associations have not only run the only two international professional conferences in adult education, organised seminars and training programmes in Asia, Africa and Latin America, it has also entered the field of helping to develop the overall strategy for adult literacy for the countries concerned. ICAE has set up an international literacy committee which has proposed a global programme of literacy for all by 2000 AD, and which has been endorsed by the Council. Thus the intellectual infrastructure for literacy co-operation belongs to these three agencies and others, who wish to, can help them with funds and personnel ...

... these organisations' membership being universal, they are the only means of bringing together the industrialised countries with their resources, educational experience and expertise and the developing countries who face problems of illiteracy in varying degrees, on a footing of equality and understanding ...

The intellectual infrastructure support that the three international organisations and ICAE's regional organisations can give to countries must take account of their differing achievements – with Latin America having crossed the literacy threshold, Asia facing massive quantitative problems, and Africa a heavy percentage of illiterates. The documentation needs of these three groups of countries are different, as are their planning needs, training modes, and the evaluation of their ongoing programme. The international organisations can assure a judicious mix of these various activities for the three groups of countries ...

The industrialised countries' governments and foundations can thus play an important role in this programme of co-operation in literacy by funding the literacy programmes proposed to be run by IIEP and ICAE ...

What is needed is (a) a long-term (10-20 years) financial commitment by the industrialised countries including the socialist countries, so that the agencies responsible for literacy in the developing countries can plan their intellectual infrastructural activities on a rational and continuing basis and consciously aim at attaining their goal of literacy for all their citizens by 2000 AD; ...

... (b) all the industrialised countries – and not only a few, notably Canada, Federal Republic of Germany and Sweden –

should participate in this funding of the two international organisations IIEP and ICAE and the regional bodies in their literacy support programmes. This would also be the most effective way of sensitising the people of the industrialised countries to the need and imperative of co-operation for literacy.¹²

12. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, *op.cit.*

The Meaning of Co-operation

Throughout this Report there have emerged a number of themes related to co-operation: the primacy of national will and purpose; internal co-operation between different basic services; the need for South-South as well as North-South co-operation, and the recognition of common interests in literacy which extend beyond ideological or political differences.

The latter point is certainly worth emphasising again. The Seminar placed much weight on an increasingly important role for regional organisations – as clearing houses for information, as resource centres, as organisers of training, as facilitators for the exchange of personnel and as catalysts in creating a climate of urgency for literacy. National will and national purposes are bound to vary enormously. What must not be forgotten is a common determination to succeed in the struggle for literacy as part of the struggle for development and change. At the heart of this struggle lies a belief in improving the quality of life for all mankind.

In its discussions on co-operation the Seminar accepted the following principles:

- international efforts should supplement national efforts
- a commitment to literacy must be made without imposing external conditions
- 'assistance' should be on the basis of equal partnership.

As one discussion group expressed it:

- „Assistance should not be a disabling mechanism, but should lead to local person-power, expertise and self-reliance.“

Now of course this last comment recognises that assistance can be a disabling mechanism; and it is vitally important to face up to this danger. As a participant from Zimbabwe forcefully expressed it, disablement happens if the partnership is one of 'horse and rider'; this would be a 'mischievous partnership' and one which would tend

to stifle local initiative and commitment as well as national sovereignty.

A similar comment came from Botswana. There the adult literacy programme is supported by four external agencies, each with different reporting systems and reflecting different policy priorities determined within four different governments. The progression from 'development assistance' in the 1960s to 'development co-operation' through 'dialogue' is in practice very difficult. It was necessary to ask the question: „has the recession led us to revert to 'assistance'?" Related to these views from the South was a Canadian plea for tolerance. Development agencies also had to create a 'climate of urgency' within their own countries. Unemployment and inflation in the industrialised world made it much more difficult to convince their own populations of the importance of this kind of co-operation. Development education at home is an essential component of external co-operation. Moreover, even when the primacy of national will and purpose was accepted, there was often a shortage of 'good ready-made projects' with which the external agencies could co-operate.

In this delicate area of international relations and international understanding, five problem areas were identified: project identification and formulation, co-operation amongst NGOs, the selection and use of consultants, evaluation and monitoring; conflicting reporting systems.

In project identification and formulation, there continued to be a tendency to impose external principles, objectives and conditions. While projects must arise as a result of co-operative effort, the ultimate decision on aims and strategy should rest with the initiating country. „Literacy is a thread which has to be wound on many cores.“ And these development cores – in the economy or in basic services – lie at the heart of each country's independent political programme. These programmes should not be distorted by external influence on policy formation. Nevertheless, unless developing countries themselves are clear about priorities and programmes, the ideal of 'dialogue' put forward is unlikely to be realised.

The question of co-ordinating the work of NGOs was raised by a number of speakers. In the Caribbean, for example, there are six NGOs concerned in some way with adult education. And it is a fairly recent phenomenon that agencies without a central remit for adult education have now moved into this field; e.g. women's organisations, trade unions and the media. Additionally, an active NGO may by-pass government co-ordinating machinery, both in dealing with local operational units and when talking to international development agencies.

Such entrepreneurship may bring rapid short-term benefits, but it can also create problems. Programmes may compete wastefully; there may be little integration with overall development planning; even 'success' may be accompanied by an inability to duplicate or expand the programme on a wider scale. Aid in this situation may be disabling simply because it inhibits the creation of strong indigenous institutions through the isolation of small technical assistance programmes however well conceived in themselves. It was suggested that NGOs – and their external contacts – must be sensitive to these implications.

The selection and use of consultants gave rise to much comment. In particular, participants were concerned about the following issues: –

- The demand by foreign agencies that consultants must be of a certain national origin.

- Selection of consultants without prior consultation with the 'receiving' country.

- Terms of contract which regard the consultant as an employee of the external agency alone.

- Procedures which prohibit or inhibit the sharing of the consultant's report with programme staff.

- Resistance – by third world as well as industrialised countries – to the use of consultants from developing countries.

The Seminar agreed that such practices should be reconsidered. Consultants (in the case of bilateral arrangements) should be regarded as being employed jointly by both parties and this should also apply to

terms of reference and to selection. If regional organisations were further strengthened, this would facilitate the recruitment and use of consultants from neighbouring and other developing countries. Finally, the consultant's report should be fully shared and discussed with both policy and programme staff, preferably prior to formal submission. It was noted that this practice is already being adopted by U.N. agencies.

Monitoring and evaluation are perhaps the most sensitive areas of all. Any development agency must certainly be satisfied that its money is well spent in terms of agreed priorities; and it will therefore need to assess outcomes, gather information on weaknesses and strengths and make judgments about the effectiveness of its involvement. At the same time this process should certainly not involve direct project supervision or control.

The reporting requirements of different agencies were referred to on a number of occasions. Reporting and monitoring there must be; and in the interests of all. But there was a need to try to overcome present confusion and waste of effort. Could there not be a simplified and unified reporting system agreed for all development agencies, whether national or international? It was suggested that such a system is already in existence for UN/UNDP agencies and is used by others in receipt of UN grants. The possibility of its adaptation and use by others should be explored.

Co-operation at any level requires mutual respect and mutual understanding. Largely because of adverse economic trends there is now a crisis in co-operation for development and a lack of congruence in policy objectives. And although this was a Seminar about literacy, if that priority is set in the more general context – as we have tried to do – then the conclusions about co-operation have much more general validity and application.

When there is a shrinkage of resources for aid, it is often the basic social services which are the first to suffer. We have already expressed our belief that this may well be a mistaken approach, even when strictly economic or financial criteria are applied. The 'magic moment' for development is often the same as that for literacy. Literacy

does not cause development but it does enable the learner to take a more active role.

When resources are scarce we must also think of new ways in which they can be mobilised. Aid for development can be supplemented in ways which tap new resources and new enthusiasms. An example was given to the Seminar of the Norwegian Secondary School Pupils Association which raised around 180,000 dollars for a literacy campaign in Zambia. The money was raised, not as a charity action, but by offering pupil labour to the community. Thousands of pupils were given a day off school on condition they did some useful job and remitted their day's earnings to the project. Besides the financial contribution, such projects help to educate the world's literate societies about those who are not.

Within the developing world it is more than ever urgent to pay especial attention to the most fragile economies and societies. These are mostly those classified as LDCs, but also includes some other countries emerging from internal upheaval. It is here that the foreign exchange constraints are most severely felt and where some of the direct costs — e.g. fuel, paper, ink — may need to be externally financed. It may well be that even the most willing and able governments will not be able to initiate any new developments unless a major part of both the domestic and foreign exchange costs are met.

The Seminar was unusual in a number of respects: —

Senior personnel from the third world were able to meet together to exchange information and ideas.

The third world met in free discussion with a number of development/donor agencies — the first meeting on literacy ever convened of this kind.

There was new emphasis on South-South and other regional efforts, especially in research, training and the exchange of ideas.

There was renewed commitment to the urgency of literacy.

It is this last point with which we must conclude and which we must continue to emphasise. Without that commitment, without a renewed

sense of urgency we shall not create a literate world. And without such a world there is unlikely to be an effective development, an improvement in the quality of life for those who need it most.

Appendix

Participating Organisations and Countries

A. International, Intergovernmental and Non-Governmental Agencies

African Adult Education Association
Afrolit
Arab Literacy and Adult Education Organisation
Centro Regional de Educación de Adultos y Alfabetización
para América Latina
International Institute of Educational Planning
International Labour Office
UNESCO
UNESCO Institute for Education
UNICEF
International Reading Association

B. Developmental and Adult Educational Agencies from OECD Countries

Canadian International Development Agency
Canadian Organisation for Development through Education
Germany
Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation (BMZ)
German Adult Education Association (DVV)
German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ)
State Ministry for Education, Berlin (West)
Ministère des Relations Extérieures, Service de Coopération
et de Développement, France
The British Council
Norwegian Agency for International Development
Swedish International Development Authority

C. Third World Countries

Africa

Botswana
Ethiopia
Guinea Bissau
Kenya
Malawi
Mozambique
Nigeria
Tanzania
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Asia

People's Republic of China
India
Pakistan
Syria
Thailand

Latin America

Mexico
Nicaragua
Peru

West Indies

Barbados